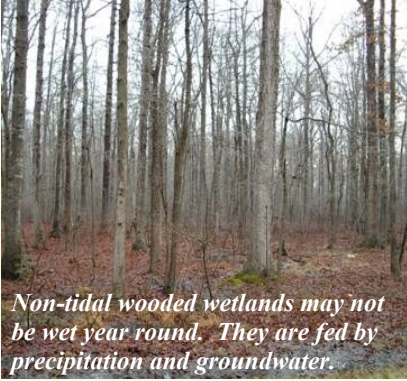


# Delaware Wetlands - what, why, and who?

Delaware's landscape is about 30% wetlands, yet we have lost approximately 50% of our wetlands since settlement. They are a special characteristic of our state and provide many benefits that protect and improve our quality of life. DNREC staff are here to help you learn more about their importance, provide guidance for landowners with wetlands on their property, and how we can all work together to protect these unique valuable habitats.

## What is a wetland?



**In the simplest terms, wetlands are found where:**

- **Hydrology** - The water table is at or near the soil surface during the growing season
- **Soils** - Special soils are present that indicate the area is often wet
- **Vegetation** - Plant species that can tolerate a wet foot.

*Wetlands do not have to be wet year round!*



**There are two primary types of wetlands. They are regulated differently in Delaware (see back page for more information).**

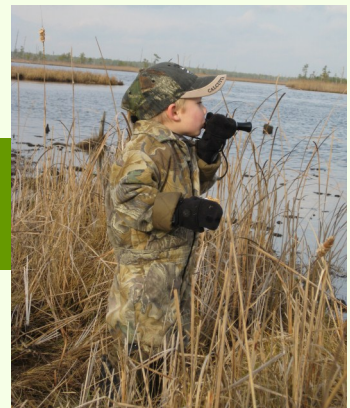
**Non-tidal** - represent 2/3rds of Delaware's wetlands. They are freshwater wetlands that are upstream far enough to not be influenced by the tide cycles.

**Tidal** - represent 1/3rd of Delaware's wetlands. They are flooded by the tide daily and are usually brackish to higher salt content.

## Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands provide a variety of benefits to humans and the environment. They provide habitat for plants and wildlife, clean our water, decrease the impact of severe storms, reduce flooding by absorbing runoff, and provide educational and recreational opportunities. When they are removed from the landscape, the services they would normally supply can cost significant amounts of time and money to attempt to replace.

- ◆ **Control flooding:** A one-acre wetland can hold 330,000 gallons of water to a depth of one foot.
- ◆ **Reduce pollution:** Microorganisms in wetland soils, in combination with vegetation, can remove nutrients and contaminants from water.
- ◆ **Drinking water supply and quality:** Wetlands contribute to sources of drinking water in Delaware.
- ◆ **Protect property:** Wetlands along the edge of water bodies help to stabilize shorelines and prevent erosion from occurring while absorbing storm energy before it reaches the upland edge.
- ◆ **Provide habitat:** Both coastal and inland wetlands provide habitat for many rare plant and animal species. They serve as nesting, feeding, and nursery grounds for fish, birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals including many popular sport species.
- ◆ **Store carbon:** Wetlands store large amounts of carbon and when wetlands are lost or degraded, CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere in large quantities.





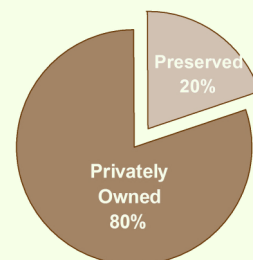
# Delaware Wetlands - what, why, and who?

## Do I have wetlands on my land and how might they be regulated?

In Delaware, the vast majority of wetlands are privately owned. Landowners can play a very important role in wetland conservation. If you do have wetlands on your property, consider yourself lucky. They provide many services to the landscape and can offer you much enjoyment through wildlife watching and habitat stewardship. There are many voluntary restoration and protection programs with cost share or compensation in which you can enroll.

To learn more visit: <http://de.gov/wetlandrestoration>

Delaware Wetland Ownership



**Wetlands are regulated by two primary means in the Delaware, through the State and through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.**

### State-regulated Wetlands - Tidal wetlands and subaqueous lands

State-regulated wetlands are all tidal wetlands and non-tidal wetlands >400 contiguous acres. Almost any activity in tidal wetlands requires a permit as does most activities in streams, ponds that have a connection to a stream, and ditches that function as streams.

- To learn more visit: <http://de.gov/wetlandpermits>
- DNREC's Wetlands and Subaqueous Lands Section at (302)739-9943.

### Federally Regulated Wetlands - Non-tidal wetlands

Non-tidal wetlands are regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. If federally regulated wetlands exist on your property, a detailed onsite investigation is typically required to begin the permitting process.

- To learn more visit: <http://www.nap.usace.army.mil/>
- Philadelphia District of the Army Corps of Engineers, Regulator of the Day, at (215)656-6728.

### **To determine if you have wetlands on your property and which agency to contact for permitting guidance:**

First you'll need to contact a professional to determine if you have a wetland on your property and what regulations or ordinances might apply to it. DNREC can provide a list of consultants who are qualified to make the determination. DNREC can also help direct you to the appropriate agencies you may need to contact for permitting information. DNREC's Wetlands and Subaqueous Lands Section at (302)739-9943.

To learn more visit: <http://de.gov/wetlandpermits>

**If there are wetlands on your property**, it means that you may need a permit from DNREC and/or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers if you are proposing any construction or landscape modification activity that might encroach upon the wetlands. Your County government may also have certain setback requirements from wetlands for the placement of structures. Be sure to contact DNREC and the Corps to discuss your plans for such activities as early as possible in the planning process.

## DNREC Wetland Help and Information:

To learn if you have wetlands on your property, for permitting information, to report violations, for guidance on caring for wetlands on your property including :

### **Division of Water**

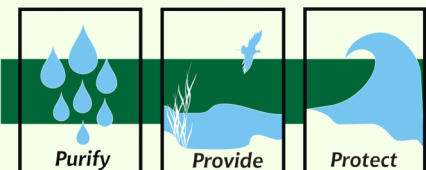
#### **Wetlands and Subaqueous Lands:**

Contact Person of the Day: 302.739.9943

Virgil.Holmes@state.de.us

[www.wr.dnrec.delaware.gov/Services/Pages/WetlandsAndSubaqueousLands.aspx](http://www.wr.dnrec.delaware.gov/Services/Pages/WetlandsAndSubaqueousLands.aspx)

## *Delaware Wetlands*



<http://de.gov/delawarewetlands>

For educational information about wetlands, wetland health assessments, voluntary restoration and protection options and ways in which you can help or volunteer contact:

### **Division of Watershed Stewardship**

#### **Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program**

Maggie Pletta

302.739.9939

Margaret.Pletta@state.de.us

Visit the **Delaware Wetlands website** to link to DNREC wetland related programs and to learn more about our valuable wetland habitats.

<http://de.gov/delawarewetlands>

